



Kenneth A. Gibson

MAYOR

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

07102



*received
1/8/79*

Dear Concerned Citizen:

I am writing to you because I am aware of your concern for Newark. I have noted, with much dismay, the City Council's action on January 3, 1979, when it approved, on first reading, an ordinance to establish a minimum staffing level for the Newark Police Department.

For the record, please be advised that I strongly oppose that action, since compliance with such minimums would require the virtual elimination of many other essential municipal services. I must take this position not because I do not support the need for effective law enforcement, but rather because it is my responsibility to assure the citizens of Newark of the full range of basic services, delicately balanced within our ability to pay. Provision for the number of police personnel indicated in the City Council's ordinance would seriously disrupt and reduce *other* municipal services. We are all familiar with the limits placed on our spending by the "Caps" law, so that it is clear that funds used to support additional police cannot be added to the budget; rather, such increased spending in that area can only be accomplished by decreasing other services to the same degree. While the ordinance does seek to require increased spending for police, neither it, nor any other action of the Council has addressed the question of those services to be reduced as a direct result of increased police personnel.

It is important for you to understand the magnitude of the problems that this action would create. While the ordinance speaks only to minimums for the basic patrolman rank, the existing contractual agreement specifies minimum ratios for each rank of superior police officers. When viewed together, the two would yield a police department of 1,300 patrolmen and 285 superior officers. Such a force of 1,585 uniformed personnel would be approximately 350 men larger than exist as of today, and about 150 men more even than were employed before the recent layoff.

The cost of such grandiose increases is staggering; salaries alone would require \$5,595,064 in additional appropriations for 1979. Holiday pay and uniform allowances would account for another \$412,194. Hospitalization coverage would add \$378,072. Pension costs would rise in 1980 by more than \$900,000. In addition, the City would face escalating costs for police vehicles and their maintenance, added communications equipment, and all the other items necessary to field a police officer. Even by the most conservative estimates, the proposed action carries a price tag in excess of \$7,500,000, or if Caps were not in effect, more than 80 points on the property tax rate.

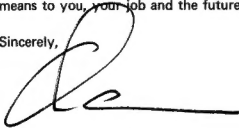
Since increased spending is not truly an option, however, the cost of this ordinance is better expressed in terms of its true effect: the number of *other* municipal employees who would be laid off.

If only non-uniformed personnel were to be affected, more than 550 existing personnel would need to be eliminated. Since the City budget currently supports only 2,176 such personnel, this would mean a reduction of over 25 per cent in those categories — 25 per cent below the reduced levels resulting from the recent layoff. If taken together with those reductions which already occurred in non-uniformed positions, the total effect would be the elimination of roughly one-third of all those outside Police and Fire.

Such wholesale elimination of these people can only be described as catastrophic. Virtually every service of the City would be curtailed and many would be totally eliminated. While I refuse to even consider such a situation, the scenario would possibly include the total elimination of all recreation activity, dramatic reductions in street-sweeping, the closing of neighborhood health centers, branch libraries, the Museum and even the main library. Street repair, snow and ice control, sign and signal maintenance would fall well below even minimum levels, and maintenance of public buildings and necessary vehicles would go unattended. Administrative areas would also be affected, and with losses in those areas would come a loss in the City's ability to control our finances, to defend our interests in litigation, and to manage those operations which would remain. It is clearly a scenario guaranteed to destroy our City. The City Council has heard from some sectors of our vast Newark community. It is vital that the Council hear from the many other important voices, like yours.

I urge you to speak to your City Council members individually and collectively. Sign up with the City Clerk's Office in City Hall (733-3758) as a speaker for the January 17, 1979, City Council meeting when this ordinance is due for second reading and final passage. Your request to speak must be received by January 12, 1979. Make your voice heard and tell the City Council what this action means to you, your job and the future of Newark.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'K. Gibson'.

KENNETH A. GIBSON
MAYOR